



**Merston faculty and graduate student affiliates gathered in the Merston Center lobby before Kendra McSweeney's presentation on November 13, 2014.**



**Kendra McSweeney, associate professor of geography, spoke to Mershon affiliates about her research on “Grounding Traffic: How the Cocaine Commodity Chain Embeds Spaces of Transit.”**



**Kendra McSweeney's research, published in Science magazine, was covered in news outlets around the world.**



**The abstract of Kendra McSweeney's talk is as follows:**

**Illicit commodity flows are emerging from the shadows—increasingly recognized as a key part of neoliberal economic geographies. While sites of illicit commodity production and consumption gain greater attention, sites of transit—so crucial to the functioning of illicit trade networks—remain largely unexplored. In this presentation, I unpack the functioning of a single rural transshipment node in the global cocaine trade, tracing the ways in which cocaine transit embeds in the social and ecological worlds of eastern Honduras' Moskitia region. Drawing from long-term research with communities there, I distinguish between 'background' agrarian dynamics and those directly related to the region's rise as a trafficking hub post ca. 2006. I show how narco-rents are captured and laundered, and by whom, and review the implications of the study for scholarship on 'land grabbing' and the role of illicit capital in the development of rural peripheries worldwide.**